

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application as amended is respectfully requested. Claims 1 and 8 have been amended; claims 2 and 9 have been canceled. As a result, claims 1, 3-8 and 10-15 are in this application and are presented for the Examiner's consideration in view of the following comments.

Applicants note that claims 2 and 9 have been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants have equivalently amended independent claims 1 and 8 to include the requirements of dependent claims 2 and 9, respectively. Dependent claims 2 and 9 have been canceled. As a result, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claims 1 and 8, as well as corresponding dependent claims 3-7 and 10-15, are in condition for allowance.

Claims 1, 3-6, 8 and 10-14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,617,587 issued October 14, 1986 to Shanley, II (*Shanley*). As noted above, Applicants have amended independent claims 1 and 8. As a result, the basis for this rejection has been removed.

Claims 7 and 15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Shanley* in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,175,600 issued January 16, 2001 to Guillemain et al. Applicant respectfully traverses for the reasons described above with respect to independent claims 1 and 8.

As it is believed that all of the objections set forth in the Official Action have been fully met, favorable reconsideration and allowance are earnestly solicited. If, however, for any reason the Examiner does not believe that such action can be taken at this time, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner telephone Applicants' attorney in order to overcome any additional objections that the Examiner might have.

If there are any additional charges in connection with this requested amendment, the Examiner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 07-0832 therefor.

Respectfully submitted
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